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*Three Cups of Deceit*

*Three Cups of Deceit* by Jon Krakauer recounts the lies Greg Mortenson feeds his readers in the books *Three Cups of Tea* and *Stones into Schools*. The book is split into three parts: The Creation Myth, Accountable to No One, and Ghost Schools. Each part details how Mortenson would tell a tale or partake in actions not suitable for an NGO. Mortenson created the Central Asia Institute, CAI, to help build schools and education in developing Central Asian countries.

Part I: The Creation Myth starts out with a few excerpts from Mortenson’s book *Three Cups of Tea*, telling how he attempted to “climb K2, the second-highest peak on earth.” His motivation, that didn’t completely motivate him to finish, was the death of his little sister Christa. He did use that motivation and promise to build a school to the village chieftain Haji Ali in Pakistan, and later multiple schools, as well as in Afghanistan. But this is a myth. Mortenson did not mistakenly walk into the village and he didn’t meet Haji Ali until a year later. He tricks the reader into thinking his story is a powerful and meaningful experience when he didn’t even have one. More deceits are uncovered later in the chapter, showing how much of a fabrication most of Mortenson’s books are, even to go as far as saying he was captured by a small Taliban group who threatened to kill him then reveal it was all a joke on him.

In Part II: Accountable to No One, Krakauer reveals the dirty paper-trail, or lack of one, of how CAI’s funds were used. Mortenson’s first donation came from theoretical physicist, Jean Hoerni, who gave him $12,000 to build his first school in September 1994. As Hoerni started to deteriorate and die, he kept funneling money into Mortenson’s projects, eventually helping him form the Central Asian Institute. As the CAI grew, Mortenson’s greed grew as well. He would use the nonprofit’s credit card to buy expensive items and for travel expenses. This happens a lot, but the problem Mortenson created was he falsified everything he did. He didn’t provide receipts for purchases; he would go around audits and the in-house accounting to be able to keep using the money for himself. As if that wasn’t bad enough, he would often disappear for weeks, up to months, at a time, running away from problems. Near the end of everything, it is estimated that Mortenson owes about $7 million to the CAI.

In Part III: Ghost Schools, Krakauer goes over many of the schools Mortenson’s organization has built in the past and how they have been doing over the years. Spoiler: not so good. Mortenson wrote in *Three Cups of Tea* that in order to combat the growth of the Taliban, there needed to be secular schools built in locations where their influence was present. However, the locations that the schools were built in had little to no Taliban influence. He made an ignorant blanket statement at a tender time in our nation’s history to garner a funding movement behind his NGO. What the leaders and people of the locations these schools were built in were saying that a large majority of the schools were not used, that they had no way of hiring competent educators and couldn’t get the parents to send the children to the schools. Why would a family send their kid to a school where they most likely won’t get an education when they can work on the farm and help around the house?

So sorry about the long “summary,” this book packs a lot of facts that I won’t be able to put down. Given that this book is such a short read, 75 pages, I suggest that you guys read it to get the whole story. Since humans naturally like to gossip (don’t say you never do, everyone does), this book just kept digging and digging, spitting out facts that show how Mortenson was a deceiver for money. But, Mortenson has done a lot of good stuff in addition to his bad stuff, so he isn’t a complete scumbag.